Which Church Would Jesus Join?

Rev. Robert L. Selle

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WHICH CHURCH WOULD JESUS JOIN?

REV. ROBERT L. SELLE, D. D.

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General Review of the Churches.

CHAPTER I.

General Review of The Churches.

The number of ecclesiastical organizations throughout the world known as Evangelical churches, runs into the hundreds. They all claim the same source of origin, the same authority for their existence and the same work as their mission in the world. Upon fundamental teachings of the Bible regarding such subjects as the Godhead, the Creation and Fall of Man, Redemption through Jesus Christ, the Free Moral Agency of Man, Repentance, Faith, Future Reward and Punishment, and Heaven and

Hell, all these churches substantially agree. Upon minor points, however, they differ. They agree on Ordinances but differ upon the methods by which they are administered. The measure of agreement or difference is largely influenced by the acknowledged relative importance of the point in question.

Each Church claims Jesus Christ as its individual Head; that it was founded upon the teachings of God's Word; that it was organized under the direction of the Holy Spirit; that its code of doctrines represents Christ's ideal; that its mission is to evangelize the world, and that its membership is composed of the

most devout, Christ-like people to be found.

These opinions are not strange, neither are they hard to understand, although they are expressed by every church that knows the name of Jesus Christ. Every mother knows her own family better than she knows the family of others, and even as this is true, every church knows itself better than it knows any other religious organization.

The fellowship that the members of a church have enjoyed in worship; in service; and the consequent blessings they have received have been such as to cause them to believe that their church

is the best church in all the world, just as each mother thinks that her children are the sweetest, prettiest and best children that ever lived.

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In view of the foregoing facts, the question, "WHICH CHURCH WOULD JESUS JOIN?" has a far-reaching significance. The question is rendered somewhat bewildering when it is seen that each church plans its work and works its plan, practically as if it were the only church in the world; each independent of the others and each taking the world as its field of operation and the evangelization of the human race as

its mission. Meetings are held, societies organized and churches established here and there without reference, as a rule, to the location of other churches, although they may be in the same neighborhood or block.

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A ludicrous but expressive story is told of a coincidence which occurred in two churches, a Methodist and a Baptist church, in the same block in a country village. There was but a single residence between the two churches, and singularly enough that one was occupied by a family of skeptics. One beautiful Sunday morning the two congregations

assembled in their respective churches to worship the Lord. Neither congregation was large enough to occupy one-half the seating capacity of either of the churches. Heartily and with voices strong enough to be heard several blocks away the Methodists began to sing that familiar hymn, "Will There be any Stars in my Crown?" As heartily and with voices equally as strong as the Methodists the Baptists sang at the same time, "No, not One; No, not One." Both congregations were singing so loudly that neither could distinguish what the other was singing. However, the people of the village who did not

attend church that day knew what each sang.

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In the great battle which is being waged between sin and righteousness, the army of King Immanuel is divided into many companies known as churches, each fighting the common foe under its own regulations with but little or no reference to the position, movement, or progress of other parts of the great army!

—o—

Should the question, "Which Church Would Jesus Join Should He Return to the Earth?" be asked representative

groups of all the denominations, the following responses would be given:

The Baptists, somewhat surprised that the question should be raised, affirm that Jesus is already a member of the Baptist Church.

The Congregationalists, likewise, most emphatically declare that the Master would quickly become a member of the Congregational Church.

The Disciples of Christ, or Christians, do not consider the question debatable at all, but state unhesitatingly that Jesus Christ would immediately become a member of the Christian Church.

The Episcopalians, with much dignity

and confidence, say that the Redeemer would affiliate with the Episcopal Church.

The Lutherans, fully persuaded in their own minds as to the righteousness of their cause, unhesitatingly declare that Jesus would become a member of the Lutheran Church.

The Methodists, true to their conviction and loyal to their denomination, say enthusiastically that Jesus Christ would choose the Methodist Church.

The Presbyterians, with convincing dignity and becoming solemnity, say with much assurance that the Master would unite with the Presbyterian Church.

Should the same question be asked official groups of a dozen, or of a hundred, or several hundred other churches, all would answer alike, positively affirming that Jesus Christ would become a member of the church represented by each group respectively.

Should the same question be asked representatives of all the Evangelical Churches in existence—old and young, large and small, white and black, in the cities and in rural districts—in quick response all would reply and the number of different answers given would equal the number of churches in the world. All would be given with equal sincerity

in the belief that they are right. Each group of representatives would name their own church and affirm that it is the one with which the Master would affiliate. Every answer given would be with such an apparent degree of authority as to indicate that each church in the great family of churches owned and controlled the Lord Jesus Christ.

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No question can be raised as to the sincerity of a single answer among the hundreds given to the same question. All were prompted by a belief that the chief principles advocated by the church of which they are members are more in

harmony with the teachings of the Bible than those of any other church, and that therefore, should Jesus Christ return to the earth, He would certainly approve of and affiliate with the church of which they are members respectively.

But notwithstanding this unquestioned honesty, they cannot all be correct. Who then are mistaken? Would Jesus be a Baptist? Would He be a Congregationalist, an Episcopalian, a Lutheran, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or a member of some other Church?

This is not a strange, foreign, out-of-place question, but a plain, practical one with which the churches of the morning

of the Twentieth Century must deal. It is a question, the importance of which concerns every church and every member of every church throughout the land.

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In order to find a satisfactory answer to the question raised in this discussion it may be necessary to draw somewhat upon the imagination, but if so, it will be pardonable.

Let it be supposed then, that Jesus Christ has already come; that He is now here; that He will withhold His identity for a season; that He will remain upon earth for an indefinite period; that the locality in which He sojourns

will not be known; that whether He is in the city or in some rural district cannot be ascertained; that while He is on earth He will affiliate with some church as a member; that the method by which He will choose His church will not be known until His choice has been made; that in His dealings with all the churches, rich and poor, large and small, worldly and spiritual, He will be absolutely fair and unbiased in His choice.

—o—

There is some light, however, which shines upon this apparently darkened problem. The record of the life of Jesus Christ is open to the inspection of

the world. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. With Him there was no yesterday and there will be no tomorrow—it is all today. What He was, He is, and what He is, He will be. Therefore, a comprehensive view of the principles involving His character and record will prove to be a key with which the problem now in hand may be unlocked.

With these rays of light gleaming upon the pathway of research, let it be further imagined that Jesus is now ready to begin the task of selecting a church with which to affiliate during His stay upon earth.

Upon what basis will He make His decision? Will it be as difficult for Him to make a choice as it would be for one wholly unacquainted with churches? What will be the effect of His decision on the church of His choice and what will be the result upon other churches? Will He be welcome in every church where He goes, and among all church-members where He may appear? Will the method by which He makes His choice be satisfactory to all when it becomes known? How far will He have to go and what amount of time will He consume in making His decision?

Methods of Choosing a Church With Which to Affiliate

CHAPTER II.

Methods of Choosing a Church With Which to Affiliate.

The mind may be a little slow to comprehend and the vision a little dull to perceive the idea of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth searching for a church with which to affiliate. Such a question may be regarded lightly by the churches and yet it may be vitally in the interest of all concerned for the subject to be brought within the realm of consideration.

There are many methods by which

Jesus can choose His church. He can employ any number, or all of them. He can consider the different names of the churches; the forms of worship; the ordinances; the forms of government; the histories; the doctrines; the character of men and women developed by the church, or He can consider them all. Any method which He will employ will affect all alike and in the end will give perfect satisfaction to all.

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In making such a decision the Master will not hurry; He will not pass over the smallest thing which deserves the least of His consideration; He will not

be influenced by either the rich or the poor; He will give everything in every church the attention which its importance justifies; He will be considerate, just and thorough with all.

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One feature of His method of choosing a church home will be silence. The daily press will not herald His coming or going. Placards in show-windows will not announce His presence. Pastors in advance of His coming will not "work up" large congregations and urge their people to "make Jesus feel at home" on a certain day when He will be a visitor in their church. Silence and

quietness with an unknown identity will be prominent features employed by the Saviour in His method of selecting the church of His choice.

He will not be deterred in His work by heat or cold, rain or shine, friend or foe, day or night. His plans are fixed and will be carried out. He will see every church as it is. He will see every church at its best and at its worst. He will not be biased in any way by rumors afloat concerning any church. He will see them for Himself and will know them as they are.

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All big "I" and little "YOU" atti-

tudes, whether of individuals or of ecclesiasticisms, will be reduced to a common level, equalling that of the average depth of a grave, in passing under the eye of the Redeemer. That which should be lowered, He will bring down; that which should be exalted, He will lift up. Those who want justice have nothing to fear. The balances are in the hand of the Lord. He numbers the hairs upon the heads of His people and keeps His eye upon the sparrow. Many features of church life almost overlooked by the general public will receive careful attention, and other features regarded as invaluable, will be

passed by, almost without notice by the Silent Visitor.

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But no matter as concerns His method, or methods, of making a choice, He is here, and He is at work. He will give all a fair trial and an equal chance. Each must pass the same tests.

His decision will be awaited with intense interest by every church throughout the world. The effect of His decision will, no doubt, prove to be startling, if not revolutionary, in its nature. His decision will settle questions which have been the subject of debate through the entire history of the church. His

decision will mark the beginning of the time when many will realize that they have been teaching as His doctrines, the commandments of men, and also, that honesty of purpose, except it be founded upon the clear teachings of the Bible, avails nothing in the sight of the Lord. The method which Jesus will employ in selecting the church of His choice will be a comprehensive examination of everything connected with every church which bears His name and claims Him as its Head.

The Name of the Church

CHAPTER III.

The Name of the Church.

In beginning the work of selecting the church of His choice, the first thing that Jesus will do, will be to examine the names of churches for the purpose of determining the value of their significance.

The name of a church is significant. The degree of importance attached to it varies with the spirit of denominational preference, and also with the character of church members in every locality where the church exists. In one com-

munity the name of a church, whether it be Baptist, Congregationalist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, or some other, may be a synonym of spirituality and saintliness, while in some other neighborhood the same may signify ecclesiastical worldliness and lifeless formality.

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The character of the people who make up the membership of a church molds the significance of its name in the vicinity where it exists. If they are known as a spiritual people, a people who love God with all their heart and their neighbor as themselves, a people

who study the Bible and pray much, a people who are not conformed to this world but transformed by grace into new creatures in Christ Jesus, the very name of the church to which they belong will be filled with heavenly music. It will be held in holy esteem and reverence.

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Such a church will be sought by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, yearning to be filled with all the fullness of God. Its pastor will not preach to empty pews and its prayer meeting will not be suspended during the summer months.

In another community the character of the people who make up the membership of a local society of the same denomination may be worldly. They may habitually play cards, dance, attend the theatre, the circus, drink beer, gamble, swear, and neglect the means of grace. The name of the church in this vicinity will stand for exactly the opposite of what it does in the instance cited in the foregoing paragraph. The name of the church remains the same everywhere, while its significance varies with the character of the people to whom it is attached. Therefore Jesus cannot be governed in His choice of a church

by its name. Its significance is too uncertain and too easily changed.

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The name is all right as far as it goes but it does not go far enough. It is too weak. It has no strength within itself. Jesus must have something more substantial than a name upon which to base His selection of a church.

—o—

Devotees to denominational names may, without intending to do so, place more emphasis on the name than they do on the church itself. Such, no doubt, will be greatly disappointed as the Master passes over the name as a matter of

little or no consequence when it appears to mean so much to them.

In His search for the church of His choice, Jesus cannot tarry long among names. He must turn to something else. He passes on.

Forms of Worship

CHAPTER IV.

Forms of Worship.

Having examined the names of the churches and not finding anything of sufficient importance to justify Him in making a choice, Jesus turns from them and takes up the Forms of Worship in the different churches.

He makes the round among the churches, going from place to place in silence, unknown and unobserved.

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Many emphasize the Forms of Worship adopted by the church to which they

belong until it becomes almost a means of grace to them. It may be, and often is, a different Form from that which is used in a neighboring church, but no matter as to that. It is the Form to which they are accustomed; the Form through which their parents and grandparents before them worshipped the Lord; the Form they know best and love most; the Form which, if Jesus should come, He certainly would adopt. This is their life-long and unquestioned conviction.

—o—

He has come. He enters the church a few momens before the services begin

and remains until they have closed and the congregation disassembled. He watches with deep interest every part of the service from the singing of the first hymn, to its close by the benediction.

Upon entering the church for the service, the members of the congregation may kneel at their pews to pray or take their seats quietly without formal prayer; they may stand or sit during the singing of their hymns; the minister may be gowned in the latest fashion of ecclesiastical robe, or dressed as a plain citizen; the Scripture lesson may be read before or after the invocation; the offering may be received before or after

the sermon; the choir may be large, small, or the singing done entirely by the congregation; mature men or young men just merging from boyhood may be acting as ushers and taking the offering; the minister may pray or read a prayer; he may preach or read a sermon; the congregation may be large or small, rich or poor, spiritual or worldly, and the service formal or informal, no matter what, Jesus is present and sees everything, hears every word and understands the real significance of everything connected with the service.

—o—

He finds that Forms of Worship are

like Names of Churches in many respects. Their significance varies according to the spirit of the people who use them. All devout people do not make use of the same Forms in their Worship of God. Forms of Worship that mean much to some, mean little or nothing to others who are equally devout. Forms of Worship may be attractive and impressive but void of spiritual life and power. They may promise much and give nothing in return. They may be like the sepulchre which is beautiful without but lifeless within.

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Jesus Christ cannot tarry among

Forms of Worship. They are too shallow for the Prince of Life. He wants something that is alive, that breathes, that moves, that speaks when spoken to and that reflects the Divine Image. Shams cannot hold Jesus. He visited the fruitless fig tree but once. They who worshipped with their lips while their hearts were far from God, received His rebuke.

There is nothing in the Forms of Worship which is substantial and abiding in its character, and, therefore no matter what they may be, Jesus cannot determine His choice of church by its Forms of Worship. They are to the

church what garments are to those who wear them. Jesus is searching for the man and not the clothes which he wears, though they may be valuable, perfectly fitted and without the slightest evidence of being soiled.

Again He passes on.

The Sacraments of the Church.

Chapter V.

The Sacraments of the Church.

Finding that the Names and Forms of Worship adopted by the different churches are essentially the same, Jesus continues His examination of the churches, turning His attention now to the Sacraments of the Church.

The word "Sacrament" as it is generally understood, means "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given by Jesus Christ, Himself." Evangelical churches as a rule have two Sacraments—Baptism and

the Lord's Supper—both of which consist of outward and visible signs of what is hoped and believed to be, inward and spiritual graces given by the Saviour.

These Sacraments, or Ordinances as they are sometimes called, are held to be Scriptural and therefore of vital importance. A few churches, however, do not hold this view.

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Jesus Christ Himself was baptized. He instituted the Lord's Supper. The Bible plainly teaches and commands both. Surely the Master will tarry long with these, His own Commandments, as He searches for a church

whose membership is made up of people who reflect the Father's Likeness.

As Jesus approaches these Ordinances for the purpose of examining them as to their spiritual significance today, does He think of the River Jordan, of John the Baptist, of the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and the Voice from Heaven which said, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?" Does He think of the night in which He was betrayed; when He stood in the Shadow of the Cross; when He gave the Bread and Cup to His heart-broken disciples as representing His broken body and shed blood? Does He think of poor Judas?

What hallowed memories cluster around the Sacraments of the Church as Jesus approaches them! He is on Holy Ground. He has come to His own.

What does He now find? Alas! alas! A group here and a group yonder disputing about the administration of the Holy Ordinances of the Church of God! There are those who will accept nothing for Baptism except immersion in water; others, equally sincere, claim sprinkling with water as the correct mode of Baptism, and still other religious bodies reject both immersion and sprinkling, and hold that pouring of wa-

ter constitutes the only Scriptural method of Baptism. There are still others who reject water Baptism altogether.

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From the Sacrament of Baptism, Jesus turns to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Differences in the administration of this Sacred Ordinance are in evidence. In some churches He finds that the Communion is administered every Sunday, while others celebrate it but once a month. Some churches observe this Ordinance once in three months, while others hold to no regular time. Still others disregard it altogether. In some churches the Communion is "close" and in others it is "open."

The differences of belief as indicated by the various modes of administering the same Ordinances cannot be attributed to degrees of piety, intelligence, honesty of purpose, or even consecration to God.

There are not a few who are firmly fixed in their opinion that a particular mode of administering the Ordinance of Baptism, whether it be sprinkling, pouring or immersion, is the only mode taught in the Scriptures. The mode may be emphasized to a degree far beyond its importance, and the significance of the Ordinance itself be overlooked.

The same thing is true regarding the

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Differences of opinion concerning its administration are often so deeply rooted that they cause a division in families; in communities and in churches. Many times the reality of this Holy Ordinance is lost in its own shadow and becomes an object of contention among the people of the Lord.

—o—

Jesus looks on. Who can know His thoughts? No word of blessing or rebuke falls from His lips at this time. He is on another mission. He has come to see the churches as they are and not what they profess to be. He sees the

use and also the abuse of the two ordinances which He gave the church, one at the beginning and the other at the close of His ministry of Redemption, to be held in precious memory of His cleansing blood and His promise to return.

—o—

The Sacraments of the churches are holy in their original significance, solemn when being administered and spiritually helpful when received in the name of the Master. Nevertheless, Jesus cannot make His choice of a church upon the basis of Ordinances, no matter by what mode or method they may be

administered. They are signs or marks intended to indicate certain spiritual attainments. The mark may be definite but the reality lacking.

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Jesus does not disregard the Ordinances of the churches any more than He did the suggestion that He needed bread after He had fasted forty days and forty nights. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," was His quick reply to the Tempter. Being applied to the Ordinances, this answer of Jesus means: "Man shall not be saved by the Ordinances of the church

alone, but by keeping every command which is given of God."

Without making His choice of a church, Jesus turns from the Sacraments and will next be found making an examination of the Forms of Government adopted by the different churches.

The Form of Government

CHAPTER VI.

The Form of Government.

What the Master may or may not find in the Forms of Government adopted by the different churches will be of deep interest to all His followers. This phase of the quesion under consideration may be regarded as of little consequence by some, but not so by Him who gave Himself for the church, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

With Jesus nothing is small. Nothing is overlooked. Everything has its place of relative value. The Form of Church Government will receive due consideration from Him.

—o—

In some churches the Form of Government is Episcopal and in others it is Congregational.

Some denominations choose their own pastors while the ministry of others is under the appointive authority of the Episcopacy.

The general benevolent enterprises of some churches are under the supervision of legally authorized boards of mana-

gers, while other churches control their benevolent affairs locally.

In some churches the ministry is paid a stipulated amount per annum and in others it is not.

In some churches there are two orders in the ministry—Deacons and Elders—while in others there are Elders only.

Some churches have Conferences, some Synods, some Conventions, and some Convocations in which the legal business of the denomination is transacted.

In some denominations the general and annual gatherings are presided over by Bishops, some by Moderators and some by Presidents.

These are not all the differences in the Forms of Government, but are enough to justify the statement that in these matters the churches differ widely.

—o—

Does the Master care whether the Form of Government adopted by a church is Episcopal or Congregational, if it is doing His work in the world?

Does He care how a minister receives an appointment to a church as pastor if he is divinely chosen for that particular field and is God's man?

Does He care how the benevolences are administered just so the greatest amount of good comes to the cause of God as a result of their use?

Does He care as to the method by which the ministry is supported as long as it is done in harmony with the Divine will?

Does He care about the method by which new members are taken into the church if they have been converted to God?

Does He care about the number of orders in the ministry if His word is preached faithfully by men of God?

Does He care whether the general and annual gatherings are called Conferences, Conventions, or Convocations, if they meet in His name to do His work? Does He care by what name

the presiding officer of a church gathering is called if he represents the Great Head of the Church?

All these and other like questions concerning the government of the church can be answered emphatically with one little word which contains but two letters—and that word is

NO.

—o—

The Master will not consider the Forms of Government long although they may be very dear and precious to many devout people. He looks through Forms searching for realities.

The Form of Government is to the

church what the house is to the family which occupies it. Jesus is searching for the family and not the house in which they live, although it may be of attractive design, commodiously arranged and beautifully decorated and finished.

Before He will reach the church of His choice, Jesus will find something that is real; something that can respond to Love. Not finding these things in Forms of Government, He turns from them continuing His search. The next matter with which He will deal will be Church History.

History of the Churches

CHAPTER VII.

The History of the Church.

History is a record of *minutia.* Church History is a minute record of all events connected with the origin and life of the church. Each church has its own History. Some churches have History covering a period of hundreds of years; others have their origin in comparatively recent years. The History of a church is either long or short according to the number of years it has been in existence.

With many, the principal point of

value in Church History is its age. The pastor of a large and influential church in a growing city was heard to say a few days ago: "I am glad that I do not belong to a church whose History began in modern times; I am glad that I do not belong to a church whose History does not go back further than a few hundred years; I am glad that I belong to a church whose illustrious founder initiated our Lord in His ministry almost two thousand years ago."

The Chinese, it is said, value things according to age. Eggs, for instance, that are one hundreds years old are many times more valuable, with them,

than eggs laid in modern times, while fresh eggs are, comparatively speaking, without a market value!

—o—

The same principle holds good among devotees of Church History. They care but little about the Name, Form of Worship, the Sacraments, Forms of Government, or the Doctrines of the Church. These things sink into insignificance while Church History looms high upon the horizon of their vision.

All other questions answer themselves in the age of the church, which is the one spindle around which all ecclesiastical wheels revolve.

But how will the Master view it? Man's opinion is valuable only to the extent that it is in harmony with the Word of God.

Will Jesus count the number of years wrapped in the History of a church?

Or will He search its pages in order to see the opportunities it has had as an agency of salvation in the world?

Or will He examine its pages to see the number of men, eloquent and influential to an extraordinary degree, who have occupied its chief positions from year to year?

Will He be interested in the emphasis that has been given to politics, sociology and commercialism?

Will He count the number of souls that have been saved from ruin through its instrumentality?

Every phase of History has its place in the great volume which records the details of church existence, and every phase, regardless of man's opinion, will be carefully examined by the Master.

—o—

Ah! He finds that History deals only with the past. It has no eye with which to watch the unfoldings of time; no smile to greet the opening of day; no finger to point to the path of safety for those whose steps are beginning to slip; no arm of strength for the weary and

heavy laden to lean upon and rest; no balm for the afflicted; no bread for the hungry; no clothes for the naked; no graves for the dead!

No matter, therefore, what the History of a church may be, whether long or short, filled with accounts of glorious victories or neglected opportunities, Jesus cannot make it the basis of choice in choosing His church.

He must continue His search.

Doctrines of the Church

CHAPTER VIII.

DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH.

The next feature to be taken up by the Master for consideration will be the Doctrines of the Church.

It is intended that Doctrines should touch, cover, and deal with every phase of human experience, time and eternity, God and the Devil, Heaven and Hell.

There are as many Codes of Doctrines as there are different ecclesiastical denominations in the world. Some of them differ widely while many are practically the same. However, there must

be enough difference in Doctrines for each to justify itself as an independent organization, else it could have no reasonable grounds for its existence.

—o—

Doctrine is the platform upon which churches are builded. Ordinarily, a church has at least one great Doctrine outstanding in its importance, upon which special emphasis is placed, such as Election, Justification by Faith, Entire Sanctification as a second work of Grace obtained by Consecration and Faith, the Second Coming of Christ, Faith Healing, the observance of the Seventh Day as the Sabbath, Salvation

through the Administration of Ordinances, or, Salvation through Good Works.

When the central Doctrine of a church has been determined, no matter what it may be, other Doctrines, adjudged adequate to meet existing conditions of necessity are added, those immediately concerned in the establishment of the new ecclesiasticism, making the additions.

All these Doctrines and shades of Doctrines are presumed to be taught emphatically by the Bible, the adherents of each affirming without hesitation Scriptural authority for the use of each of them.

Regarding personal Salvation, Doctrines deal with the condition of the sinner; name the conditions necessary to be met in order to obtain Salvation from Sin; point out the steps leading to Regeneration; show the blending of human and Divine agencies in securing Peace with God; define and designate the place and work of Faith in Justification and the entire Christian Life; specify all the requirements necessary in the obtainment and retention of that Holiness which is essential in order to see the Lord in Peace, and cover every phase of God's relation to and dealings with the human family.

The Master sees all. He examines all. He knows the value of each. He notes the differences which exist. He understands the motives underlying and leading to the formation of the different codes upon which the many denominations have been founded. He sees them from their beginning. He knows what they have done and what they are now doing. He does not consider the opinions of man regarding their alleged Scriptural authority or value. He does not take into account the number of people influenced, neither the amount of property accumulated as a result of their existence.

A single Doctrine may be considered with approval until its apparent importance becomes overshadowing. No doubt this is done by many in all churches. The fact is, the human vision is so limited that it is difficult to see more than one thing at a time, and often the one thing seen is as "through a glass darkly."

But is is not so with the Master. His vision is clear. He sees all at the same time. He knows the value of each and the value of all combined. Will He select His church because of the Doctrines it emphasizes in its creed? If so, which will it be? Which can it be?

Every denomination answers enthusiastically in its own favor, but an interrogation point stands between Jesus and the Doctrines of each church in the matter under consideration here.

He finds that Doctrines, no matter how good nor how clearly stated they may be, are dead within themselves. They produce results only as they are handled by men, and the results are determined by the manner in which they are handled.

Doctrines are often interpreted differently by men who profess the same belief in and loyalty to them. They may be used to advantage in God's

Kingdom; they may be so abused as to bring discredit to the Master's work; or, entirely neglected. Not the Doctrines themselves, but the character of the people who handled them, determine their value as an agency of salvation.

Jesus cannot select His church upon the basis of Doctrines. They are good. They have their place. They are essential. It is evident, however, that something more than Doctrine is needed to save the world from sin.

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Jesus has, with an unbiased mind, a clear, comprehensive vision and with a just conception of value, examined the

salient points of differences existing among the churches. No church has a favorite Name, a favorite Form of Worship, a favorite method of administering the Ordinances, a favorite History, or favorite Doctrines with Him. All stand upon a common level and received like attention from the Master.

What step will He next take? Has He not considered every phase of church life? Is there anything else which awaits His attention? Has Jesse another son? Will He also come before the Prophet Samuel?

Character Developed by the Church.

CHAPTER IX.

Character Developed by the Church.

Jesus now turns from the printed page and from the houses of worship to the business world. There He will examine the Character of the Members of the different Churches with the view of determining His choice among the churches.

People who make up the Membership of the Churches, as a rule, handle the commerce of the world. They are to be found everywhere—in banks; in

stores; in offices; in factories; in shops; on farms, and everywhere else that the foot of man treads.

In those pivotal places where the vast interests of the business-world are transacted, and where the centers of operation are maintained, everything is done in accordance with some well defined law. The requirements of the civil law are regarded more or less, while the law of custom and habit, the law of usage and liberty are written in large letters upon charts which closely adhere to Conscience. There is, however, one other law always present—a bigger, better law—the law of Golden Rule.

In searching for His choice of a church in the business world, Jesus enters first a banking-house. He is not transcending His privilege or authority by so doing, for the officers of the bank are members of the church and bear the name "Christian." Is He not at home and among His own when He is with them in their place of business?

He makes this visit as the Author of the only law by which business can be successfully transacted for two worlds, and not as a patron; not as an inspector; not to count the money in the vaults; not to inquire into the future prospects of the institution. He listens to every

conversation. He examines the day-books and ledgers. He witnesses each transaction. He understands the law which governs every word and act.

The character of the man He finds in control of the bank and the laws which govern their affairs, is the means by which Jesus determines the value of the church to which they belong, as an agency of developing Character in the world.

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From the banking-house, the Master goes into the store. Queer place and odd time to look for a church? But the church people are there and in

charge of the business. They are the same people in the store-room that He saw in the church the preceding Sunday, the only difference being the clothing which they wear. What they are in the store from Monday morning until Saturday evening, influences the world far more for good or evil, than their lives in the church on Sunday.

Jesus passes slowly through the store. He looks at cost-marks and sale-prices on every article. He examines the quality of the different lines of merchandise and listens to the representations of their value as they are shown to customers. He watches the yardstick as

measurements are made and the scales as groceries are weighed. He stands between the merchant and the purchaser. His interest in each is equal. He understands the Law by which the business is transacted and accordingly determines the quality of work being done by the church of which the merchants are members. Character is the governing principle in business.

—o—

From the store to the office is the next turn which Jesus makes. The business world does not know church people by their denominational names—as Baptists, Congregationalist, Episcopalian,

Lutheran, Methodist or Presbyterian. They are all "Church members" and all churches are the same from a commercial point of view.

The office is the heart of commerce, education, politics, and sociology. The different lines upon which the business of the world is transacted, all center in the office. Every point on the globe and every phase of business in the world can be touched and controlled with lightning's speed from the office.

Jesus is present. He stands in their midst. He listens to every consultation. He hears the dictation given to every stenographer. He reads every

message that goes to the wires. He is among people who profess His name and are members of the church. He is there for the purpose of determining the laws by which their business transactions are consummated, and when so determined, He will take them as an indication of the kind of character developed by the Church with which the men in the office officiate.

The Church is not an institution for the Sabbath only, but for every day in the week as well. Its doors are closed after the last service of the Sabbath, but are opened again early on Monday morning throughout the business world.

Millions of people who do not attend church services on the Sabbath, deal with church people through the week. Their ideals of the Church of God are not formed from the things that are seen and heard in places of worship on Sunday, but from what is seen and heard in personal contact with members of the church during the week. Character molded in the Church on Sunday manifests itself in the world through the week in commercial, social and political affairs.

—o—

The factory is the next place where Jesus makes His appearance. Here as

elsewhere, He comes to His own. Men in charge, as well as those who labor, affiliate with the Church. They are not strangers to Him. He should not be a stranger to them. He sees the materials from which every article is produced and knows its value. He understands the cost of production as well as the selling price. He sees the rate per cent of profit realized upon the investment. Every phase of the business is open to His inspection.

The Master is here upon an important mission, a mission whose interests are as wide as the human family. Here, the results of the Church as a character-

builder are exemplified under the laws which govern the transaction of business. Jesus does not ask a question. He sees everything as it is. He hears all orders as they are given. He understands the books as they are kept. He knows what the Church is doing for the people in charge and thereby determines its value as an institution of salvation among men.

Jesus leaves the factory and goes into the shop near at hand. Much the same conditions prevail, but as they are owned and controlled by different people, He must go into and through the shop also.

A shop is a place where new articles are manufactured and old ones repaired. Nothing appears new to the Master. He looks around and about on everything as He did when He visited the Temple. Though His presence is unknown and He is unseen, He knows every man connected with the shop, the wages or profits he receives, the amount of time and service given in exchange for the price of labor given, and the law by which every transaction is made.

With full knowledge of conditions as they exist among the men, employees as well as employers, Jesus determines the value of the Church to which they be-

long as a builder of character in the world.

If the Golden Rule is the controling principle in all its affairs, or if it is not, Jesus knows it and His decision is rendered upon facts as they exist. Character stands out in bold relief from everything else before the vision of Jesus Christ.

The farm is the next place where Jesus is found.

The farm is God's garden. He made the soil and sends the rain to water it and the rays of the sun to give it warmth. He made the seeds of corn

and wheat, of fruits and vegetables, and gave to man a share of His own mind, thereby enabling him to enter into co-operation with his Creator in planting the seeds, cultivating the crops and gathering the harvests.

As the result of this co-operation, God's garden produces food and raiment for all His creatures. If, at times, there should appear to be a lack of either food or raiment, or both, it is because there has been a slackness on man's part in co-operative effort with God to produce the necessities of life. God does not take pleasure in withholding either necessities or good things from

His children, but, to the contrary, has made abundant provision for bounteous supplies of both.

Jesus walks about in His Father's garden. Every plant is a thing of beauty and is full of interest to Him. Nothing is without its significance or value. The Master knows perfectly, the men who co-operate with the Creator in tilling the soil and dressing the garden. They are near the heart of God. They are working first-handed with Him and His. Jesus knows the spirit they maintain, the thoughts which fill their minds, and the motives which prompt their activities.

In God's garden, it would seem, more than anywhere else, Jesus will find His own. All excuses for wrong-doing and righteousness neglected must be manufactured. There is less material from which to make excuses by workmen in God's garden than anywhere else in all the world. They work in His sunshine; breathe His pure air; drink His fresh water; eat from His hand of bounty, and clothe themselves from His Fatherly gifts.

They may see His name in large letters on every blade of grass; on every leaf in the garden; on every grain of sand, and in every drop of dew. They

can hear His praises sung by the rippling waters in the brook; by the rain as it falls upon the roof; by the wind as it sighs upon the boughs of the trees as an artist's hand upon the key-board of a great musical instrument, and by the birds whose chants are songs of love to their Maker.

God's Garden, commonly called "the farm," is a suburb of Paradise.

The Master has not come to see the beauty of the garden, however, but to determine the Character of those in charge of it. He is hunting for a church, the membership of which, exemplify "the first and great command-

ment," and also "the second which is like unto it" in their daily lives. It takes but a passing glance for Him to determine the value of the church to which these workmen in the field belong. All that the church is to them, and all that it does for them, is seen and heard in the lives they live; the spirits they manifest; the words they speak, and the things they do.

—o—

The next place Jesus is found is in the home. The home is the foundation of State and Church. Every institution in the world depends upon the home for its maintenance. Capital and

labor, business and society, education and Christianity, are indebted to the home for their existence. The ideals of manhood and womanhood are born and nurtured in the home. Without the home this world would indeed be "a waste, a howling wilderness," filled with desolation and unfit for habitation by fowl or beast.

The State depends upon the home for its citizenship. Commerce depends upon the home for its armies of producers and consumers in the world's markets. Society depends upon the home for men and to supply its ever increasing demands. The Church of

God depends upon the home for its membership. It is impossible to attach too great importance to the home.

Jesus is in the home. He is unseen, but sees; unheard but hears; unknown, but knows all. He knows the attitude of the husband toward the wife and the attitude of the wife toward the husband. He knows the relations which exist between parents and children and the attitude of each toward the other. He knows the relations which maintain among children and the feeling of each toward the others.

He knows all about the government of the home; the example of parents be-

fore children, in thought, in word, and in deed; the ideals of life which are being formed; the effects of home influences upon the family; the paths toward which the tender feet of children are turning, and the influences of home environment. He sees it all without defective vision and weighs all without biased mind.

He understands the effect of the Church upon the life of the home and determines its value as an agency of eternal life on the basis of the fruit which it bears in the home.

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Having completed the search for His

choice of a Church with which to affiliate, Jesus is now ready to make His selection. His choice will be without embarrassment to any, although it may be a great disappointment to many. His choice will not be made upon tradition, representation, profession or appearance, but upon realities. His choice will not be made upon records of the past or promises for the future, but upon conditions as they exist at present.

—o—

The Church whose membership has been found to be Christ-like in thought, and word, and deed, and so exemplified in daily business life, regardless of ev-

erything else, Jesus pronounces most emphatically as,

THE
CHURCH
OF
HIS
CHOICE.

Characteristics of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER X.

Characteristics of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Now that Jesus Christ has definitely chosen His Church, it will be a matter of interest to all the world to know something of its leading characteristics, which may be summarized as follows:

Name.—The name of the Church of Jesus Christ will become known to the world by the Scripturally exemplary lives of the people who compose its membership.

Form of Worship.—Its Form of

Worship is flexible, conforming to the conveniences of its membership no matter what their environment may be.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT.—Its Form of Government is pliable, readily adjustable to any conditions with which it may have to deal.

HISTORY.—Its History begins with the promise of the Father to send His Only Begotten Son as a ransom for the sins of the world.

DOCTRINES.—Its Doctrines embody all that God requires of man and are plainly taught in the Holy Book.

THE CHARACTER IT DEVELOPS.—The Character that the Church of Jesus

Christ Develops is as much like His Character as the branches are like the vine out of which they grow.

—o—

The Church of Jesus Christ is the Church for the individual; the Church for the classes; and the Church for the masses. Children find a delightful home within its fold. Young men and maidens count it their highest joy to give it the strength of their manhood and womanhood. They who "have borne the burden and heat of the day" within its gates, find that in the evening time it is light.

None are too young or too old; too

wise or too ignorant; too strong or too weak; too good or too bad to be brought into the Church of Jesus Christ. Its doors are open from morning until evening and from evening until morning again. Whosoever will may enter. No questions are asked concerning past life. A willingness to comply with the conditions of entrance, is all that is required. The price of admission is within the reach of all.

—o—

The Church of Jesus Christ is an Aggressive Church. It has a mission in the world and that mission is to win souls to the Master. The lost sheep

upon the mountain-side must be brought back to the fold, no matter how dark the night nor perilous the undertaking. The "other sheep" must also be found and helped into the "one fold" regardless of the efforts which may be necessary for its accomplishment.

The cry from Macedonia; the call from over the deep; the appeals from the ends of the earth for help, must be answered. Those who "sit in the region and shadow of death" must be awakened and lifted up so that they may see the "Light of the World." The hungry in heart must have the Bread of Life. The thirsty must have that

water which if they drink, they shall "never thirst again." The "weary and heavy laden" must have that rest which has been provided for them in the atonement of Jesus Christ. The spiritually blind must have the eyes of their understanding opened. The "dead in trespasses and sin" "must be born again."

The Church of Jesus Christ has caught the vision of opportunity and responsibility confronting it regarding the evangelization of the world, and with the readiness of Isaiah who said, "Here am I, send me," and the obedience of the Master Himself, expressed in the shadow of the Cross, "Thy will, not

Mine, be done," it is ready for the triumphant march.

—o—

The Church of Jesus Christ is a Conservation Church. The "altar against altar" system is eliminated. Two or more churches are not built where one is sufficient to meet the needs of the community. Two or more ministers are not mainained where one can do the work as well as or better than several. The money saved and extra ministers secured by conservation are used for the Glory of God in communities that were without the Gospel of Christ. No confusion arises from the lapping of Church

interests in the same territory. Ample provision is made for the spiritual interests of people where the Church exists, nothing more, and then with all the resources of men and money available, the "Glad Tidings of Great Joy" are carried hurriedly to those who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ.

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The Church of Jesus Christ is a Ministering Church.

It has food for the hungry; clothing for the naked; hospitals for the sick; sympathy for the erring; schools for the young, and Love for all. Its arms are long enough to reach around the human

family, and strong enough, through the Atoning Blood of Jesus, to uplift the vilest sinner.

The ears of the Church of Jesus Christ are opened to the cries of distress, no matter from what source they may arise; its eyes are open to opportunities to do good in the world; its hands are ready to lift up the fallen and minister to their necessities; its feet are ready to go upon errands of mercy to help the needy, no matter how cold the night, nor how stormy the way; its lips are ready to speak words of sympathy, encouragement and helpfulness any time and anywhere in the interest of better-

ing the conditions of man; its heart is full of tender compassion for all grades and classes of humanity, no matter as to their condition of life.

—o—

The Church of Jesus Christ is an Unselfish Church.

The spirit which it manifests is the Spirit of its Great Head who voluntarily left the riches of Glory and became poorer than the foxes that have "holes" and the birds that have "nests," that others, through His poverty might be rich.

The spirit which "seeketh not her own" and "in honor preferring one an-

other" pervades the Church of Jesus Christ. Its thought is for the other man and its desire is to put him in touch with the best things for two worlds. It does not seek gain with a view of consuming it upon itself, but to use it for the benefit of others. The Church of Jesus Christ is blessed that it may be a blessing to others, and saved, that it may be a means of saving others.

—o—

The Church of Jesus Christ is a Successful Church.

The wilderness and the solitary
place shall be glad for them; and

the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like a rose.

It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it; the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the weak knees.

Say to them that are of a fearful heart: be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance; even God with a re-

compense; he will come and save you.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there;

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away—*Isaiah* 35.

The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ; neither shall the powers of darkness triumph over it. The strong man of Sin shall be bound by the stronger man of Righteousness and cast out.

The Captain of the Lord's host has never been defeated in battle. Victory is inscribed on all His banners. The word of the Lord shall not return void; it shall accomplish that for which it has been sent forth. The reapers shall return with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

The Church of Jesus Christ is Heaven's hospital. The halt, the maimed

and the blind are taken under its sheltering care for treatment. The sick and wounded and dying are blessed within its healing fold. The aged, the infirm, and the decrepit are strengthened through its ministrations.

Heaven's Hospital is conducted upon different principles from those which govern other hospitals. It is the only one of its kind in the world. Patients are admitted without money and without price, and also without reference to the cause of the malady or the history of the case.

None are too rich or too poor; too worthless or too near the grave to be

admitted as patients to this Hospital. Its doors are open day and night to all who are afflicted with the dreadful malady of sin. Its nurses are men and women who have been made whole within its gates. They know how to deal with every patient as they, every one, have been patients within its wards.

The Great Physician is personally in charge of every case. He has never lost a patient who was willing to submit to His treatment. His remedy is simple, but sufficient. It is the "double cure" which saves from wrath and then makes pure.

The Church of Jesus Christ is a Holy

Church. It has a Holy Origin and has a Holy Foundation; a Holy Purpose and a Holy Mission in the world. Its Doctrines are taken from the Holy Book and it depends for life and sustenance upon the Holy Spirit. Sainthood is its standard.

No matter as to the character of lives lived by its people before coming in touch and fellowship with Jesus Christ, His Blood washes away every sin and cleanses the heart from depravity, and then with His own power "preserves blameless" and "keeps unspotted from the world."

"I love Thy Kingdom, Lord;
The house of Thine abode;
The Church our Blest Redeemer saved
With His Own precious Blood.

"I love Thy Church, O God,
Her walls before Thee stand;
Dear as the apple of Thine eye
And graven on Thy Hand.

"For Her my tears shall fall;
For Her my prayers ascend;
To Her my cares and toils be given
'Til toils and cares shall end.

"Beyond my highest joy
I prize Her Heavenly ways;

Her sweet Communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of Love and Praise.

"Sure as Thy truth shall last,
To Zion shall be given.
The brightest glories earth can yield
And brigther bliss of Heaven."

—o—

"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the Royal Diadem,
And crown Him Lord of All.

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,

Hail Him who saves you by His Grace
And crown Him Lord of All.

"Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget
The wormwood and the gall;
Go, spread your trophies at His feet
And crown Him Lord of All.

"Let every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all Majesty ascribe
And crown Him Lord of All.

"O that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall.
We'll join the everlasing throng
And crown Him Lord of All."

"I am dwelling on the mountain,
Where the golden sunlight gleams,
O'er a land whose wondrous beauty
Far exceeds my fondest dreams;
Where the air is pure, ethereal,
Laden with the breath of flowers,
They are blooming by the fountain,
'Neath the amaranthine bowers.

"I can see far down the mountain,
Where I wandered weary years,
Often hindered in my journey
By the ghosts of doubts and fears,
Broken vows and disappointments
Thickly sprinkled all the way,
But the Spirit led, unerring,
To the land I hold to-day.

"I am drinking at the fountain,
Where I ever would abide;
For I've tasted life's pure river,
And my soul is satisfied;
There's no thirsting for life's pleasures,
Nor adorning, rich and gay,
For I've found a richer treasure,
One that fadeth not away."

—o—

"I have found a friend in Jesus, He's everything to me,
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul;
The Lily of the Valley, in Him alone I see,

All I need to cleanse and make me
fully whole;
In sorrow He's my comfort, in trouble
He's my stay,
He tells me every care on Him to
roll,
He's the Lily of the Valley, the bright
and morning Star,
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my
soul.

"He all my griefs has taken, and all my
sorrows borne;
In temptation He's my strong and
mighty tower;

I have all for Him forsaken, and all my idols torn
From my heart, and now He keeps me by His power.
Though all the world forsake me, and Satan tempts me sore,
Through Jesus I shall safely reach the goal.
He's the Lily of the Valley, the bright and morning Star,
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.

"He will never, never leave me, nor yet forsake me here,
While I live by faith and do His blessed will;

A wall of fire about me, I've nothing
now to fear;
With His manna He my hungry soul
shall fill;
Then sweeping up to glory we see His
blessed face,
Where rivers of delight shall ever
roll.
He's the Lily of the Valley, the bright
and morning Star,
He's the fairest of ten thousand to my
soul."

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